

## Message Text

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ACTION PM-04

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SS-15 L-03 MMO-01 INR-07 /031 W

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R 291950Z APR 76

FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7562

C O N F I D E N T I A L PANAMA 2994

STADIS////////////////////////////////////

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, PN

SUBJECT: IMPACT OF NEW SECURITY ASSISTANCE LEGISLATION ON MAAGS  
AND SIMILAR ADVISORY MISSIONS OVERSEAS - PANAMA

REFS: A. STATE 97277, B. PANAMA 1296, C. PANAMA 1453, D. PANAMA A-33

1. I CONSIDER THAT THE NEGOTIATIONS FOR A NEW CANAL  
TREATY, AND THE PROBABLE SHAPE OF OUR DEFENSE RELATIONSHIPS  
WITH PANAMA THEREAFTER, MAKE IT INAPPROPRIATE TO  
CONSIDER PANAMA AS ONE MORE MILGROUP IN THE CONTEXT  
OF REF A.

2. THE NEW TREATY WILL PROVIDE THAT PANAMA PARTICIPATE WITH  
THE U.S. IN DEFENSE OF THE CANAL. CANAL DEFENSE  
IS AN IMPORTANT U.S. GLOBAL COMMERCIAL AND STRATEGIC  
INTEREST. OUR LARGEST MILITARY FORCE IN LATIN AMERICA  
IS COMMITTED TO THIS MISSION. PANAMA IS NOW SEEKING TO BUILD  
THE MILITARY CAPABILITY TO PARTICIPATE AS AN EQUAL  
PARTNER IN THE DEFENSE OF THE CANAL (REF D). WE HAVE  
CONSISTENTLY SOUGHT TO ASSURE THAT THE U.S. REMAINS THE  
SOLE, OR PRINCIPAL, SUPPLIER OF MILITARY HARDWARE,  
TRAINING AND ADVICE TO THE PANAMANIAN NATIONAL GUARD  
(REFS B AND C). THIS WILL BECOME EVEN MORE IMPORTANT WITH  
A NEW AND MORE BALANCED CANAL DEFENSE RELATIONSHIP.  
THE USMILGROUP/PANAMA IS VITAL AS AN ADVISORY MECHANISM,  
AS WELL AS A CHANNEL FOR MATERIAL AND TRAINING ASSISTANCE  
AND TO FACILITATE CASH AND CREDIT MILITARY SALES.

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3. PARTICIPATION BY PANAMA IN CANAL DEFENSE PRESUPPOSES NOT ONLY A BASIC SIMILARITY IN MILITARY HARDWARE, TRAINING, DOCTRINE AND OBJECTIVES, BUT A DISPOSITION OF THE PANAMANIAN MILITARY TO BE FULLY COOPERATIVE. CREATION OF THIS NECESSARY DISPOSITION IS PROBABLY THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT FUNCTION OF THE MILGROUP HERE, AND COULD PROBABLY NOT BE ACCOMPLISHED WITHOUT IT.

4. IN ADDITION, THE NATIONAL GUARD IS THE SINGLE MOST DOMINANT POLITICAL FACTOR IN PANAMA AND APPEARS LIKELY TO REMAIN SO FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE. BEYOND ITS STRICTLY DEFENSE-RELATED ASPECTS, THE NEW TREATY WILL PRESUPPOSE THAT THE HISTORIC "CAUSES OF CONFLICT" BETWEEN THE U.S. AND PANAMA CAN BE ELIMINATED AND REPLACED BY A MATURE PARTNERSHIP. THIS WILL TAKE POLITICAL WILL ON BOTH SIDES, BOTH IN THE ACTUAL NEGOTIATION OF THE NEW TREATY AND BEYOND INTO ITS IMPLEMENTATION. CONTINUING DEVELOPMENT OF CLOSE AND HARMONIOUS RELATIONSHIPS WITH SENIOR OFFICERS, AND RISING YOUNGER OFFICERS, OF THE NATIONAL GUARD IS AN ESSENTIAL PART OF PRESERVING AN OVERALL POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH THIS PARTNERSHIP MAY GROW AND FLOURISH. ABSENT AN ADEQUATELY-STAFFED PROFESSIONAL MILGROUP, I FIND IT DIFFICULT TO CONCEIVE HOW SUCH A FAVORABLE POLITICAL ORIENTATION CAN BE SYSTEMATICALLY FOSTERED WITHIN THE OFFICER CORPS. AT BEST, IT COULD BE DONE ONLY ON A HIT-OR-MISS BASIS, AND OUR VERY REAL INTERESTS IN THE CANAL APPEAR TO ME TO REQUIRE BETTER IF WE CAN MANAGE IT.

5. I CONTINUE TO HOLD THE OPINION THAT A MILGROUP STRUCTURED ESSENTIALLY ALONG PRESENT LINES IS THE MOST ACCEPTABLE AND EFFECTIVE WAY TO ACHIEVE THE ABOVE OBJECTIVES. IN THE NEAR TERM, THE NATIONAL GUARD IS CONSCIOUS OF A REQUIREMENT FOR EXPERT ADVISORY ASSISTANCE WHICH A NORMAL ATTACHE OPERATION COULD NOT BE EXPECTED TO PROVIDE. OVER THE LONG TERM, OUR SITUATION IN PANAMA--WHICH WILL INCLUDE A SUBSTANTIAL OPERATIONAL U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE AND A US-PANAMANIAN SHARED MILITARY RESPONSIBILITY AND OBJECTIVE--WILL REQUIRE CONFIDENTIAL

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A MUCH CLOSER OPERATIONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE NATIONAL GUARD THAN IS THE CASE ANYWHERE ELSE IN LATIN AMERICA, AND PROBABLY ANYWHERE ELSE IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD. I REALIZE THAT THERE ARE STRONG CONGRESSIONAL OBJECTIONS TO CONTINUATION OF THE MILGROUP IN ITS PRESENT FORM. BUT THE FACT IS THAT IN PANAMA, OUR MILGROUP HAS EVOLVED INTO SOMETHING FAR BEYOND A SIMPLE DISPENSER AND EXPEDITER FOR U.S. SECURITY ASSISTANCE, AND THE REQUIREMENT FOR

IT THUS IS BEYOND THE TERMS IN WHICH THE GENERAL DISCUSSION  
IS COUCHED.

6. FOR THESE REASONS, I BELIEVE THAT THE DEPARTMENT,  
ALONG WITH DOD, SHOULD SEEK CONGRESSIONAL REALIZATION  
AND ACCEPTANCE THAT THE NEW CANAL TREATY, AND THE  
RELATIONSHIP TO BE BUILT UNDER IT, MAKE OF PANAMA  
A SPECIAL CASE, AND THAT THIS SPECIAL CASE REQUIRES  
THE RETENTION OF THE USMILGROUP/PANAMA, AUGMENTED AS  
PREVIOUSLY REQUESTED BY THE EMBASSY, AT LEAST WELL  
INTO THE TERM OF THE NEW TREATY. OUR FAILURE TO DO  
THIS WILL, IN THE LONG RUN, SAVE US LITTLE OF VALUE AND  
COULD DO MUCH TO JEOPARDIZE THE VERY REAL CONTINUING  
INTEREST WE HAVE TO PRESERVE IN THE PANAMA CANAL.

JORDEN

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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** Z  
**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** MILITARY ASSISTANCE, LEGISLATIVE BILLS, MILITARY ADVISERS  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 29 APR 1976  
**Decaption Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Decaption Note:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** blochd0  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1976PANAMA02994  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** GS  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Film Number:** D760163-0897  
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**Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
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**Line Count:** 131  
**Locator:** TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM  
**Office:** ACTION PM  
**Original Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** STADIS  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 3  
**Previous Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Previous Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** STADIS  
**Reference:** 76 STATE 97277, 76 PANAMA 1296, 76 PANAMA 1453, 76 PANAMA A-33  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** blochd0  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 21 JUL 2004  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <21 JUL 2004 by MartinML>; APPROVED <28 OCT 2004 by blochd0>  
**Review Markings:**

Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
04 MAY 2006

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** IMPACT OF NEW SECURITY ASSISTANCE LEGISLATION ON MAAGS AND SIMILAR ADVISORY MISSIONS OVERSEAS - PANAMA  
**TAGS:** MASS, PN, US  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006